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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000022

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL MISSION FOR IRAQI ELECTIONS (IMIE)
WORKS TOWARDS COMMON SENSE TIMELINE

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Michael Oreste for
reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. On January 3, IMIE representatives Fred Schaffer and Reem Ersheid told Poloffs that IMIE is sensitive to the media and political pressures associated with their efforts, and would therefore make a preliminary announcement before IECI's final certification of results. The IECI plans to announce preliminary results on January 8, with a final certification announcement occurring January 18-20. Schaffer estimated an IMIE announcement timeframe of 1-2 weeks - after the IECI preliminary announcement but before final certification. Schaffer said they would be able to better focus their efforts once the remaining IMIE members arrive January 3. Meanwhile, various political parties have been awaiting IMIE's arrival with anticipation in the hopes of sharing their complaints about campaigning and election fraud, and using IMIE's findings as a political bargaining chip for leadership positions. End Summary.

IECI ANNOUNCEMENT TIMEFRAME

¶12. (C) On January 2, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer Harith Hassan told PolFSN that the IECI had completed adjudicating all but one red complaint case. Hassan mentioned that the remaining complaint related to fraud concerns in Out-of-Country Voting in Turkey, would most likely be resolved by the end of January 3. Given this timeline, the IECI would be able to make an announcement of certified final results as early as January 4. However, International Commissioner Craig Jenness noted to PolCouns and PolOff on January 2 that the IECI would announce preliminary results January 8, with the follow-on announcement between January 18-20 (septel).

IMIE MAPS OUT ITS PLAN

¶13. (C) Poloffs met with IMIE representatives on January 2 to discuss IMIE's timeline and agenda for their two week stay. Fred Schaffer (American) and Reem Ersheid (Palestinian) noted that the six IMIE members, once fully assembled, would be divided into two groups: one focused on IECI complaints and audits, and the other focused on political party complaints. Schaffer told Poloff that their focus and organizational structure had not yet been finalized, but that the complaints and audit team would be focusing on the complaints process, IECI audit results, and Kirkuk registration fraud issues. Ersheid said the political party team would be communicating soon with the political parties.

¶14. (C) Schaffer said a final report would not be produced until well into February. However, because IMIE is aware of the importance that the Iraqi media and political parties are placing on their work, they understood the importance of developing some type of statement or preliminary report prior to the IECI's certification of final results. Schaffer declined further comment on IMIE's work, noting that his team members, most of whom he had not met, had not decided among themselves how best to proceed.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND MEDIA PREPARE FOR IMIE'S ARRIVAL

¶15. (C) Local media has begun highlighting the arrival of the IMIE observers. Likewise, political parties are awaiting their chance to speak with these experts. Leading Iraqi National List members Dr. Adnan Pachachi, Mehdi Hafez, and Ibrahim al-Janabi told PolCouns and PolOff December 31 that they will welcome and cooperate with the new team of monitors from IMIE. They hope that this IMIE team will report that there were serious election violations and fraud. They want to use such a report to strengthen their

bargaining position in government formation negotiations. Such a report will help them to counter Shia Coalition demands that ministries should be distributed according to the results at the ballot box by calling into question whether the Shia Coalition majority really reflects the voters' real choice.

COMMENT

16. (C) The arrival of IMIE representatives are being seen as a panacea to Iraqi political parties, particularly to the Sunni Arab bloc and to the Iraqi National List. They view IMIE's arrival as both a face-saving mechanism to their constituents as well as a way to improve their bargaining position during government formation negotiations. Others are viewing IMIE's arrival as a way to silence discontent with the Iraqi election and confirm the IECI's results. IMIE representatives are aware of the importance being placed on their work, but it remains to be seen whether the focus or results of their work will satisfy those opposed to the results of the election.

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